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a horse  
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**SORE  
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Horse shows can be good fund raisers, particularly when Tennessee Walking Horses and other high-stepping breeds are present to add flash to the performance. In planning horse shows, however, sponsors should take note of an important Federal law that says: "Sore horses may not compete!"

#### **THE HORSE PROTECTION ACT**

"Soring" is the use of pain to accentuate a horse's gait. This cruel practice is specifically forbidden by the Horse Protection Act.

Although the law covers all breeds of horses, Congressional hearings prior to passage of the Act focused on the problem of soring Tennessee Walking Horses. Thus, Government enforcement has primarily been directed toward that breed.

Emphasis of the law is on barring sored horses from competition and thus destroying the motive for soring. Sponsors and managers may not hold shows that include sored horses. Owners, trainers, and riders may not enter or ride sored horses in shows. And drivers may not haul sored horses across State lines to compete in shows.

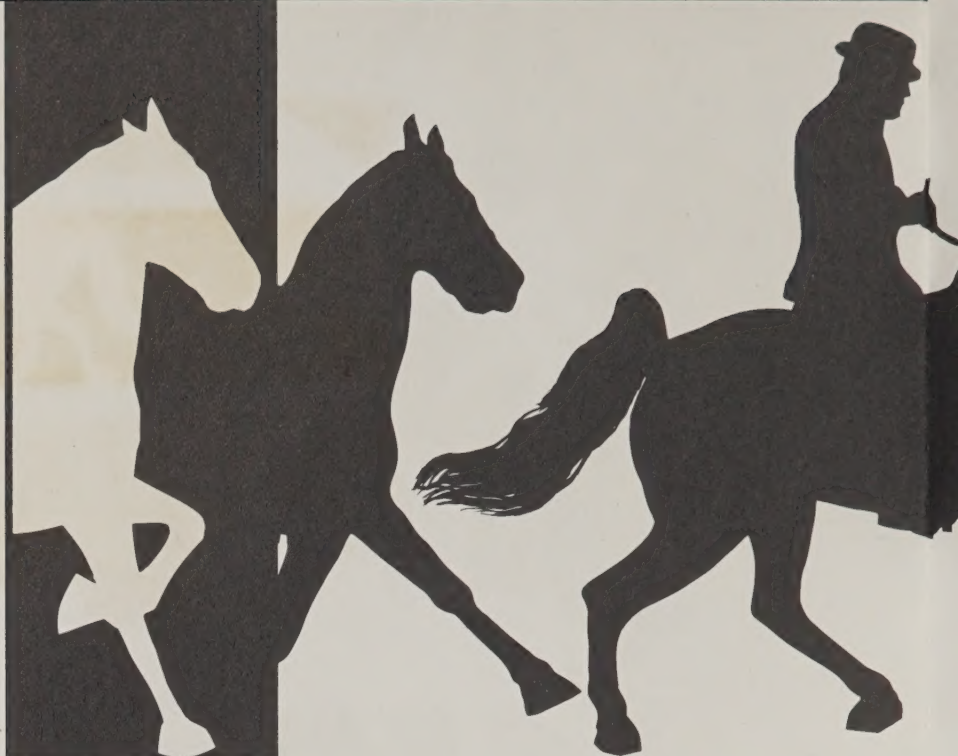
#### **DEVELOPING A CHAMPION**

Everybody who shows Tennessee Walking Horses wants to have a champion. Trainers work hard to develop a horse with the ideal gait of the breed—a high reach of the front legs combined with a long, gliding stride behind. This "free and easy" walk was first known to have been performed by Bald Stockings, a horse foaled in 1837.

Tennessee Walking Horse owners always have enjoyed impromptu get-togethers to show whose horse had the best gaits. After the 1930's, these competitions developed into prestigious horse shows. Prizes increased sharply and winners received increasingly high returns from horse sales and stud fees.

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That's where soring came in. In the early 1950's, unscrupulous trainers started soring horses as a shortcut to the patient, extensive training required to turn a well-bred colt or filly into a show winner.

A trainer sores a horse by applying chemical or mechanical irritants to the front feet. The horse then changes its gait by placing its hind feet further forward to relieve the pain in the front feet and by raising the front feet quickly whenever they strike the ground. The total effect is a long, rear stride and a high, far reach in front—a remarkable imitation of the performance of a sound, well-trained horse.

A horse forced into this "imitation" gait will not perform correctly unless it feels pain. Thus, the horse must be sore for every performance. Sore horses sometimes develop permanent scars that bleed again and again with little provocation.

Abuses such as these added to the outcry that led to passage of the Horse Protection Act. The Act seeks to correct the abuses by barring sore horses from competition and thus destroying the motive for intentional soring.

## **SHOW MANAGEMENT'S RESPONSIBILITY**

Managers of a horse show—the people who sponsor and run it—have the major legal responsibility for stopping soring. They are responsible for examining each entry and either excluding sore horses from competition or disqualifying them before the class is placed.

Show managers can help meet these responsibilities by affiliating with horse show associations and abiding by their rules. Some 1,800 horse shows held annually already are affiliated. The associations provide judges, stewards, and licensed "designated qualified persons" (DQP's) to help enforce government regulations.





DQP's are individuals trained and licensed by a horse industry organization or association to detect sore horses. They must have basic qualifications and experience and may be doctors of veterinary medicine who have experience with horses and who are accredited by USDA. Or they may be farriers, horse trainers, and other knowledgeable horsemen with the knowledge to function as horse show stewards and judges.

Unaffiliated shows can operate most effectively by hiring DQP's to identify horses that should be disqualified. Managers of such shows must also instruct judges, stewards, and show veterinarians to exclude sore horses.

No matter who helps, managers themselves must make sure that Federal regulations are followed. For instance:

- Horses must automatically be barred if they were foaled after 1976 and have scars indicative of soring on both front legs.
- Horses must not wear any prohibited devices, such as beads, bangles, and other trotting devices (except lightweight hardwood, aluminum, or stainless steel rollers).
- Unauthorized substances on the feet of horses must not be used during competition. All lubricants must be furnished by show managers and kept under their supervision.
- Pads between the foot and the shoe may not tilt the front feet excessively. The length of the toe must be at least 1 inch longer than the height of the heel.

## ENFORCEMENT

The Horse Protection Act is enforced by the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS)—an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. APHIS inspectors come to horse shows unannounced to check for compliance by management and participants. Inspection



covers all areas of the show grounds and all performances of a show.

APHIS cannot inspect every show, but show management still has the obligation to comply with the law. Management also should be aware that even if no Federal inspectors attend, APHIS can bring a case against violators based on information supplied by private citizens.

The APHIS inspection team can include veterinarians, animal health technicians, and investigators. They look at horses throughout the show, giving selected horses a thorough physical examination with particular attention on the front feet. For this purpose, show management furnishes an inspection area close to, but separated from, the show ring.

Physical examinations are given to horses that look sore, horses that win first place, and randomly selected horses. Therefore, if a horse is selected for examination, it does not always mean that soring is suspected.

APHIS veterinarians look for abnormal sensitivity or insensitivity, which may be shown by swelling, tenderness, abrasions, bleeding, or oozing of serum. They pay particular attention to the coronet band above the hoof, to the front and rear pastern, and to the bulb of the heel—favorite places for chemical soring. They also look for prohibited devices and other training aids that are too heavy and too hard. A heavy, rigid device banging on the pastern during repeated workouts can sore sensitive horses.

Inspectors may use thermovision during the physical exam. This technique scans a horse's feet with infrared sensors that detect temperature changes. Since inflammation caused by soring results in a heat rise in the foot, the "heat image" from thermovision provides useful information. The image can be photographed for use as evidence in prosecution.

When a violation is suspected, charges are brought against those responsible. Convictions can result in up to one year in prison, penalties of up to \$3,000, and disqualification for one or more years from the right to show, exhibit, or sell horses.

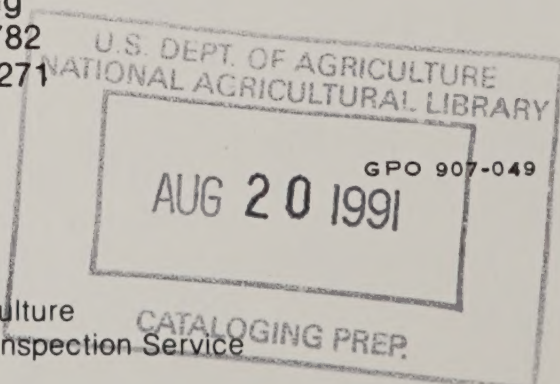
## **FURTHER INFORMATION**

To obtain a copy of the regulations affecting horse shows and answers to questions about complying with the Horse Protection Act, contact:

Chief Staff Veterinarian for Horse Protection  
Animal Care Staff, VS, APHIS, USDA  
770 Federal Building  
Hyattsville, Md. 20782  
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U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

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